

INL Intelligence

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A high-level monthly briefing on operations and activities at the U.S. Department of Energy's Idaho National Laboratory
Work at the lab advances the Department's strategic goals in the areas of energy, environment, defense and science.

■ Idaho Space Battery Powers Key NASA Science Mission

A space battery assembled and tested at Idaho National Laboratory was launched into space Jan. 19 as part of NASA's New Horizons mission to Pluto and beyond. The battery will power seven different experiments that will be conducted when the tiny probe reaches its destination sometime around 2015. The unique power system, which relies on a non-weapons-grade form of plutonium and thermocouple technology to generate electricity, was selected by mission planners who determined there just isn't enough solar energy available near Pluto to operate the scientific equipment onboard New Horizons. INL employees have already begun retooling for the next big NASA mission, the Mars Scientific Lander, which is slated for a September 2009 launch.

■ Boise-based Company Licenses INL National Security Technology

Proswat, Inc. of Boise has been awarded the commercial license for INL's Tactical Timed Firing Device. This small, self-contained timing unit – developed at INL – is capable of initiating an explosion after a preset time ranging from seconds to an hour. The design allows the disposable timer to be directly connected to a small amount of explosive agent and set to automatically detonate without anyone needing to be physically present to push a button. The technology was commissioned by the Department of Defense to provide military and law enforcement officers with a low-cost, safe option when they are challenged to remove or destroy improvised explosive devices, mines or roadside bombs.

■ Chinese Nuclear Energy Group Visits Idaho

A delegation of 10 high-level Chinese officials visited INL early this month as part of a U.S. - China workshop on civilian nuclear power. The meeting was held under the auspices of the *Peaceful Use for Nuclear Technology* agreement between the two countries. The workshop explored technical areas of mutual interest and set the framework for a cooperative program addressing identified technical issues. "The workshop provided a forum for open exchanges between U.S. and Chinese experts, an opportunity to discuss technical topics in more detail and to lay out a roadmap for further collaborative exchanges," said James Lake, INL's associate laboratory director for nuclear programs.

■ INL Scientist Selected for Congressional Fellowship

INL Water Resources Committee co-chair Jerry Sehlke, who works in the lab's Ecological Sciences Department, has been appointed to a one-year congressional fellowship by U.S. Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid. Sehlke was notified by Reid's Nevada Operations and Legislation director that they would like the environmental scientist to focus on water, natural resources and alternative energy issues. Sehlke reported to his Wash., D.C. post Jan. 18. "I'll learn what kind of scientific information policy makers want and need, and will help the scientific community understand which research is useful to those trying to solve society's problems," Sehlke said. The American Geophysical Society is administering the fellowship, which is being funded by Battelle Energy Alliance.

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